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STAT

'Don't count on' Seymour Hersh

The last time I saw former New York Times reporter Seymour Hersh in the news was a little over a year ago, when I was interviewing him for this paper. At that time he told me such unbelievably idiotic things as:

He didn't know if communism was godless or if the North Vietnamese tyrant Ho Chi Minh was a more honorable man than either South Vietnamese President Thieu or Richard Nixon.

Said Mr. H: "Just because somebody is a communist doesn't mean he doesn't have some personal integrity."

Well, now Mr. H is once again in the news and he appears to be as stupid as ever. According to an article in the American University paper, The Eagle, headlined "Hersh Cautions U.S.," Mr. H has urged our country to stop "fighting immorality with our own immorality."

In his recent talk, sponsored by the Kennedy Political Union and the Society of Professional Journalists, Mr. H complained that the United States "went bananas" when the Soviets shot down Korean Air Lines Flight 007, murdering 269 innocent men, women and children.

Mr. H said the United States "went bananas" even though "the evidence is now clear that the Russians made a terrible mistake." Our "instinctive action" to this atrocity, he said, "hurt relationships with the Russians."

Huh? What in the world was this guy talking about? There is no evidence at all that the shooting down of Flight 007 was anything other than an act of premeditated, cold-blooded murder. As for the United States having gone "bananas" in reaction to this brutal act of mass, mid-air murder, the assertion is ludicrous. The Reagan administration did nothing about this carnage, nothing of any real substance at least.

In his talk at A.U., Mr. H, criticizing a variety of U.S. foreign policy actions, asked rhetorically: "What am I advocating? I don't know — maybe unilateral disarmament."

Sure, why not? If you believe, as Mr. H. has said, that communists can be honorable men with personal integrity, then why not unilaterally disarm? I mean, they certainly wouldn't take advantage of us, right?

In the winter 1984 issue of the University of Chicago magazine, an exasperated Mr. H. tells an interviewer who had asked about his motives: "What difference does it make what's in my mind? Who cares?" He says that his latest book "The Price of Power" speaks for itself.

But this is an astonishing question for a reporter to ask. Obviously, what is in one's mind is what determines the light in which one views all facts. This is an extremely relevant question. Arguably it is the most relevant question that can be asked of a journalist.

But Mr. H is not your average, run-of-the-mill reporter. No siree. Noting that he is a person who wants to have "impact," this University of Chicago magazine piece quotes him as saying, with characteristic brashness, "I'm not interested in history because I'm trying to change things."

Well, indeed, Mr. Hersh has tried to change things in his latest book. And the price of some of the things he alleges in "The Price of Power" should cost him \$100 million bucks in damages, according to a lawsuit filed on behalf of Morarji Desai, a former high official of the government of India.

In his book, Mr. H says of Mr. Desai that he sold some of his government's confidential information to the CIA for \$20,000 a year, and that he was fired from his post of deputy prime minister by Indira Gandhi in 1969. In a document filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, Mr. Desai's attorney says these charges are "false and defamatory." And, it is alleged, Mr. H's book contains quotes from "highly biased sources, out-of-context quotes or misquotes from responsible sources, statements that are not based upon any source whatsoever, and distorted information."

In his recent talk at A.U., Mr. H did say something with which even his critics will probably agree — certainly when it comes to himself. Warning about the fallibility of the national media, The Eagle quotes Mr. H as saying, "Don't count on us."

Well, don't worry, Mr. H., not many of us do.